

June 23, 2008

E-19J

Jeanne Higgins
Forest Supervisor
Great Divide Ranger District
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
68 South Stevens Street
Rhinelander, Wisconsin 54501

Re: **Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Proposed Cayuga Project on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (Forest), Great Divide Ranger District (Ranger District), Ashland County, Wisconsin
EIS No. 20080166**

Dear Ms. Higgins:

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has reviewed the United States Forest Service's (USFS) revised Draft EIS for the Cayuga Project located on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Our comments in this letter are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations, and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

In 2004, the Forest adopted a new Forest Plan, which provides general guidance regarding the management of National Forest lands. The Forest Plan divides the Forest into different Management Areas (MAs), each having particular objectives and a desired future condition. The purpose of the proposed project is to initiate actions that implement the Forest Plan and move forest resources toward the desired future conditions for the MAs located in the Cayuga analysis area. The Draft EIS documents analysis of a No-Action alternative plus five action alternatives. The alternatives differ by 1) treatment type and acreage and 2) the amount of harvest proposed within the Marten Reintroduction Area. The Draft EIS indicates that Alternative 2 is the Proposed Action.

Based on our review, we have assigned a rating of "**EC-2**" (**Environmental Concerns – Insufficient Information**) to the revised Draft EIS. We are concerned about the viability of the marten population based on the actions proposed for occupied marten habitat in Alternative 2. The Biological Evaluation for Regional Forester Sensitive Species and information contained in the revised Draft EIS indicate that Alternative 6 should not negatively impact the viability of marten. Based on this information, we believe Alternative 6 is the least environmentally damaging in terms of impacts to marten and recommend the USFS select Alternative 6 as the Preferred Alternative for this project.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this letter. Please send one copy of the revised Final EIS to our office when has been finalized. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Kathleen Kowal of my staff at (312) 353-5206 or via email at kowal.kathleen@epa.gov

Sincerely,

/s/ Anna Miller for Kenneth A. Westlake, 6/23/08

Kenneth A. Westlake, Supervisor
NEPA Implementation
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

cc: Jim McDonald, Regional Environmental Coordinator
Enclosure – Summary of Rating Definitions